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Foundations of College Writing – Dr. Sherry

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**Education Majors: Why They Choose the Ages They Want to Teach**

**Problem**

When a person is trying to decide what they want to be when they get older, there are many factors that are to be considered. Specifically, for someone who wants to go into the field of education, there is one major question that one asks oneself: What age group would I like to teach? In this paper, I address the answer as to why education majors choose the specific field of education that they are majoring in, and what factors go into that decision. First, I provide background from three scholarly sources focusing in on each grade level. Then, I address this question using ethnographic data in the form of interviews. Finally, I come to a conclusion as to why people choose the specific major in education that they do.

**Background**

Studies have show that there is a national shortage of qualified personnel in the field of early childhood education, and these shortages are magnified in regions characterized by poverty and rural geography (McLaren, Rutland, pg. 1). One would wonder if that would encourage someone to become one of the many teachers that can change that. The Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for improved student learning has highlighted the importance of school-university partnerships in preparing teachers capable of increasing student achievement (Howell, Carpenter, and Jones, pg. 1). Teacher candidates cite clinical field placements as the most powerful learning experiences of their pre-service education (Howell, Carpenter, Jones, pg. 2). This is available to middle-level education majors at Bloomsburg and because of this people may want to choose the middle-level to teach.

Another study has shown that when choosing college majors, students are more influenced by the expected flow of future earnings than by their expected initial earnings (Berry, Fougere, Maurel, pg. 4). This may be another influence of why people choose their grade level because of how much they will get paid.

Given that there are shortages in these areas, there are those opportunities in the middle-level field, and when initial earnings and job opportunities come into play, what does this say about why people chose their specific age level? Did these factors come into play when they were deciding on what grade level to teach?

**Method**

I have used ethnographic methods to study the why behind people choosing to do certain things. Using ethnographic methods has helped me get a little closer to answering my basic question throughout this paper. To answer the questions I have posed, I have interviewed different people in each subdivision under the major of education. I have asked them the core question of why they chose to teach the grade level that they did and what influenced them to make their decision.

**Findings**

While conducting these interviews, I asked the participants five basic questions: What is your major? Why did you choose this major? How much work do you generally get? Why did you decide to come to college? What made you pick Bloomsburg? I interviewed one person from each major: early childhood education, middle-level education, and secondary education. First, I asked them each my main question: Why did they choose this major? For the early childhood and middle level participants, they both responded that the reason they chose this was because they love kids. For the secondary education major, they responded that it was because she had a teacher that had influenced her in high school. These answers showed me that the main reason that my interviewees chose their age level was because they loved those age-level kids.

Another question I asked was how much work they generally get. The answer to this was pretty similar: a lot. One even said that they get to about five hours a night of homework. The other questions I asked I also received very similar answers to as well.[[1]](#footnote-1) When asked about why they decided to attend college and why they chose Bloomsburg, they all responded that they chose to further their education to get a career and they chose Bloomsburg because it was perfect for their major and very welcoming.[[2]](#footnote-2) People have chosen Bloomsburg because of the possibilities available to them in the education major.[[3]](#footnote-3)

During these interviews many of the interviewees told me personal stories of them interacting with children who inspired them to become teachers. I found that the ages of the children that their stories were about coincided with the age group that they want to teach. They told me that these children introduced them to the idea of teaching.

**Conclusions**

Based on the data I have found, people choose the age level they want to teach because they feel a connection with the age group that they are going to teach. While I was interviewing each person, they told me specific stories that were about children in the age group that they are planning to teach in the future, and they felt a connection to them. This proves that people tend to want to teach the age-level that they are the most familiar and have a connection with.

**References**

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**Howell, P., Carpenter, J., & Jones, J. (2013). School partnerships and clinical preparation at the middle level. Middle School Journal, 44(4), 40-49.**

**McLaren, E., & Harp Rutland, J. (2013). Preparing Early Childhood Special Educators in Appalachian Kentucky. Rural Special Education Quarterly, 32(1), 46-55.**

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